



ARLINGTON COUNTY
SPORTS COMMISSION
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 414
Arlington, Virginia 22201



February 16, 2020

The Honorable Libby Garvey
Chairman
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Ms. Garvey,

I am pleased to provide the 2019 annual reports on the activities of the Sports Commission and the Aquatics Committee.

If you or the other Board members have any feedback or questions about the content of these reports, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shirley Brothwell".

On behalf of the Sports Commission and Aquatics Committee
Shirley Brothwell, Chair
Sports Commission

Cc: County Board Members
Bill Ross, Park and Recreation Commission Chair
Cynthia Hilton, Aquatics Committee Chair

Arlington Sports Commission 2019 Annual Report & 2020 Annual Plan

Summary

During 2019, the Sports Commission continued with the four areas of focus it identified in 2018:

1. **Recreational Facilities, Facility Capacity, and Related Issues** - work to improve rectangular and diamond field condition, availability and efficient use and develop a better understanding of current and unmet demand for indoor facilities;
2. **Underserved Groups and Communities** – enhance Commission’s understanding of sports issues for underserved youth, differently-abled athletes, and seniors, including current opportunities and unmet needs and how access to sports and an active and healthy lifestyle can affect the health of vulnerable populations;
3. **Improving Commission Networks** - increase engagement with other advisory Commissions and key stakeholders in Arlington; and
4. **Ongoing Projects** - continue and complete existing work.

The Commission made good progress on many of its planned activities. Some of these activities will be rolled over into the 2020 Annual Plan

Structure and Membership

Membership has remained a priority for the Commission in 2019. To better represent the Arlington sports community, Commission membership was raised from 13 to 15. Commission members during 2019 included: John Bacon, Shirley Brothwell, Janet Eichers (left February 2019), Matt Galan (left in October 2019), Sherry Kohan, Drew Murray, Jessica Deegan-Paska, Dave Maher , Steve Severn, Corey Simples (left April 2019), George Thompson, David Tornquist, Kristi Sawert (Joined March 2019) John Mingus (joined in May 2019), Megan Sheckles (joined in May 2019), Nancy Sharkey (Joined in June 2019), Ryan Schaefer (joined November 2019), and Justin Wilt. Shirley Brothwell served as the Commission Chair in 2019. Justin Wilt was the Vice Chair.

The Commission has sole authority over two subsidiary bodies -- the Arlington Youth Baseball Authority (AYBA) and the Diamond Field Fund Committee.¹ In 2020, the Commission intends to examine the continued need for both groups. In addition, the Aquatics Committee is a joint committee of the Sports Commission and the Arlington Public Schools. The Committee reports to independently to the School Board and through the Sports Commission to the County Board on issues related to the adequacy and efficiency of aquatic-related programs and facilities.

¹ The Arlington Youth Baseball Authority is charged with improving the baseball experience for ballplayers ages 12 & under, focusing specifically on making progress toward the consolidation of two league-run youth baseball programs. The Diamond Field Fund Committee consults with diamond field users to identify projects that should be funded using diamond field user fees.

Participation in Work Groups, Committees, and Other Processes

In 2019, the Sports Commission was an official member of the following groups:

- Four Mile Run Valley (4MRV) Working Group
- Jennie Dean Park Committee (a sub-group of the 4MRV Working Group)
- POPS Advisory Committee
- Long Bridge Aquatics and Fitness Center Fee Working Group
- Greenbrier Operations Committee
- Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Committee (PSMP-IAC)

The Commission also voluntarily monitored the following processes:

- Aquatics Committee Fee Proposal
- Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC)/Building Level Planning Committee project on the New Elementary School at Reed
- Career Center Working Group
- Madison Manor Park Renovations
- Upper Bluemont Park Conceptual Design Project
- 26th St. & Old Dominion Site Master Planning Task Force

The Commission will continue to seek official involvement in any planning project that involves or could involve sports and recreational facilities and programming.

Issues Addressed in 2019

A. Completed Projects

- **Comments on the budget and CIP:** The Commission supported the County Manager's 2019 budget, suggesting potential areas for additional revenue or cost-cutting. We also provided comments on the 2019-2028 Capital Improvement Plan, where we support continued investment in Arlington's sports facilities by sticking to planned maintenance/replacement schedules and completing planned projects.² We also [forwarded to the County Board and County Manager in February with comments, a letter from the Aquatics Committee](#) that proposed a new approach for setting fees at public pools to better distribute operations and maintenance costs among user groups; the Commission appreciated the Aquatics Committee's goals but did not support the new approach.
- **PSMP:** The Commission's multi-year participation in the PSMP Advisory Committee culminated with March and April letters and testimony to the Planning Commission and [County Board on the Request to Advertise](#) and on the [final vote to approve the plan](#). The Commission applauded the plan for significantly increasing our understanding of Arlington's public spaces and public space needs. In recognition that more data will be collected to facilitate implementation, the Commission called for data to be developed on the need for and availability of open/casual use space (as is done for athletic fields), and to involve field

² The Commission spoke to the County Board on the budget and the CIP and participated in budget conversations with the County Manager.

users as data on field utilization is developed. In light of practical constraints on meeting all Level of Service objectives contained in the PSMP, the Commission noted its strong support for using synthetic turf and lights to maximize the usable hours of the current field inventory.

- **Diamond Field Fund:** Following redevelopment and conversion to synthetic turf, a project that was supported with \$190,000 from the Diamond Field Fund, the adult softball field at Gunston Middle School was opened in June.
- **League Field Scheduling Forum:** As part of its role in facilitating communication and studying the use of and adequacy of existing facilities, the Commission hosted an open forum in July 2019 where DOR and several youth leagues discussed their field scheduling processes, challenges, and ideas to help improve field use. The results of this forum are summarized as Appendix A of this report.

B. Ongoing Projects and Topics of Interest

The Commission structured its agendas and requested presentations that supported its four focus areas. We also scheduled discussions on emerging issues, covered below under “Other Topics.”

- **Recreational Facilities, Facility Capacity, and Related Issues:** Update from the Long Bridge Aquatics and Fitness Center Fee Advisory Working Group; DPR presentation on scheduling and maintenance of indoor space; DPR presentation on forthcoming MOA with Marymount University ([see Commission letter](#)); discussion of the history, purpose, and future of field user fees and the rectangular and diamond field funds; DPR presentation on trends in field maintenance budget, staffing, and activities; and various project updates (Long Bridge Park Aquatics and Fitness Center. Barcroft batting cage enhancements, Gunston softball field, Upper Bluemont Park design process – [see Commission letter](#), TJ upper synthetic field installation).
- **Underserved Groups and Communities:** Presentation from DPR’s Office of Therapeutic Recreation; presentation from DPR’s Office of Senior Programs; presentation from Senior Olympics; presentation by Destination 2027 about looking at policies and practices through an equity lens.
- **Improving Commission Networks:** Through its invitations to DPR offices and Destination 2027, the Commission took steps to build its networks in new areas.
- **Ongoing Projects:** PSMP IAC updates; Career Center PFRC/BLPC updates ([see Commission letter](#)).
- **Other Topics:** DPR presentation on Safe Sport Act requirements and implementation; discussion of DPR’s practices for ensuring its staff are properly vetted and trained to keep young athletes safe at all times; presentation on challenges faced in sports officiating (finding and keeping enough referees and umpires); providing DPR advice on how to respond to a request from Arlington Travel Baseball to be charged affiliate versus rental rates for its use of fields at the 13U and 14U levels.

C. Commission Structure and Operations

- **Commission Charter:** The Commission is working to update its charter, last updated in 2014. The new charter will better reflect the Commission's role; relationship with the County Board, DPR, sports leagues, and other stakeholders; and its areas of focus.
- **Development of Roles and Responsibilities for Commission Members:** In an effort to ensure full and fair coverage of all Arlington sports activities and groups, the Commission discussed and developed areas of responsibility for each Commissioner. Commissioners will be expected to conduct outreach on an annual basis to the groups they represent and bring these views back to the Commission. These designations will also help better distribute workload among Commissioners and facilitate project-based monitoring assignments.
- **Commissioner Input in Developing Agendas:** During a 2019 Commissioner orientation session, Commissioners expressed interested in being more involved in developing agendas for the year and planning in advance for what topics will be discussed, to the extent feasible. Commissioners also expressed a desire to discuss a wider range of topics, broadening the group's focus to include other issues besides fields and field usage. To that end, the group has developed a list of agenda topics for 2020 that will guide its operations.
- **Aquatics Committee:** The Commission continues to examine its relationship with the Aquatics Committee. The structure and authority of the Committee is unusual among County advisory bodies: the Committee is jointly chartered by the County Board and School Board which share responsibility for appointing its members. Per the Committee's charter, it reports directly to the School Board and is to report through the Sports Commission to the County Board. Of tradition, a member of the Committee is also a member of the Sports Commission to facilitate communication and coordination between the two groups. At its April 2019 meeting, the Committee discussed the relationship with the Sports Commission and various options for how to restructure the relationship moving forward. According to the Committee's meeting minutes, 5 of 10 Committee members present voted unanimously to (1) become an independent committee separate from the Sports Commission, reporting directly to both the County and School Boards; and (2) propose that the Committee have sole authority over all aquatics-related sports and programs in the County, to include not just the 3 APS pools but also the forthcoming Long Bridge Aquatics and Fitness Center. The proposal, which was discussed with the Committee's County Board liaison as early as May 2019, was not shared with the Sports Commission. The Commission learned of the proposal upon receiving the Committee's 2019 annual report in late January 2020 and has not had time to develop a position.

2020 Annual Plan

Topics the Commission plans to address in 2020 include:

- Purpose, level, and implementation of fees charged to County field users. The Sports Commission will establish a Field Fee Working Group to assess these issues and make recommendations to the County Board for the 2022 budget cycle. This group will also consider the future of the Diamond Field Fee Fund.

- Field scheduling approaches by sports leagues affiliated with DPR and opportunities for improvement. This will build on the Commission's July 2019 meeting.
- Increased interaction with all sports groups in Arlington and improved representation of their interests in Commission business. This will be achieved through periodic Commissioner updates under the Commission's new representation model.
- Actions taken by DPR and sports leagues to implement consistent and robust practices for ensuring the safety of youth sports participants in DPR and partner programs.
- Developments in recreation and travel sports in Arlington, including access and impact on users and facilities.
- PSMP implementation, which is expected to focus on improving the definition and understanding of available field hours in 2020.
- Progress in various sports facility progress, including Long Bridge Aquatics and Fitness Center and Lubber Run Community Center.
- Other issues that may arise that are consistent with the Commission's role and charter.

Arlington Aquatics Committee 2019 Activities¹

Purpose

The Arlington Aquatics Committee (AC) is a joint committee of the Arlington County Sports Commission and the Arlington Public Schools.² The AC is charged with ensuring community engagement in the operation and use of the Arlington indoor swimming pools located within the three high schools (hereafter known as the “pools”) and with making recommendations, as needed, on behalf of users to the County Board, through the Sports Commission (SC), and to the School Board.

Structure and Membership

The AC is comprised of ten members (five appointed by the County Board and five appointed by the School Board). The AC County Board Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR) staff liaison is Anthony Morton, who is serving until a replacement for former DPR liaison, Jennifer Lainhart, is hired. The Arlington Public School Board (SB) staff liaison is Helena Machado.

As the year opened, the County Board members of the Committee included Marilyn Judson (Vice-Chair), Janet Eichers, Ljudmila Mladenovic, and two vacancies due to term expirations (Hesse and Romanek). The School Board members were Cynthia Hilton (Vice-Chair), Guy Land, MacKenzie Kearney, Kristi Sawert, and Ron Kampeas. During the year, Ms. Mladenovic resigned. The following were selected to fill these DPR vacancies: Carla Fletcher (vice Romanek), Howard Seamens (vice Hesse), and Eden Berhane has been proposed to fill the Mladenovic vacancy.

Meetings

The AC met nine times in 2019. The AC continued the practice of rotating meetings between the County’s three high school-based pools and the APS Syphax facility. Meetings at the Syphax facility have been incorporated into the rotation, given parking constraints at the high schools.

During these meetings, public comment was received on several issues: (in no order of importance)

- **Parking Constraints.** Onsite parking at all high schools is insufficient for pool patrons, especially during mid-day swim and during the monthly Civitan Flea Market held at the I-66 garage used by WL.
- **O&M Fee Parity:** Concern was expressed about the lack of O&M fee parity between community user groups, which continues despite adjustments made in the FY 2020 budget. Support was advocated for an O&M fee structure that provides parity among all user groups regardless of how they use the pool, if user fees are to be charged.

¹ Approved by the AC 14 JAN 2020.

² The AC is separately chartered by the County Board and the School Board.

- Fourth APS Pool: Support was expressed for a pool to be built within the footprint of the expanded high school facilities planned at the Career Center (CC).
- Middle School Dive Team: Concern was expressed about APS decision to terminate middle school dive opportunities without public consultation.

FY 2020 Work Plan

The AC adopted a work plan to coincide with the 2019-20 school year. The elements of the work plan follow:

- MOA Revision – MOA defines the working relationship between DPR and APS on the operation and management of Arlington’s APS pools. Revisions are expected to be developed by staff and shared with the AC for review and comment in 2020.
- Budget – The AC continues to support parity of O&M fees charged to community users of Arlington’s public pools. The AC has offered recommendations to County and School Board members on how to achieve parity and reduce the need for tax support.
- SC/AC Relationship – The AC is in the midst of a dialog with AC/SC County Board liaison Matt de Ferranti and the SC aimed at improving the reporting structure of the AC to the County Board. The AC has endorsed and advanced a proposal to delegate all aquatic issues in the County to the AC, with a direct report to the County Board through the Board’s member liaison and notice to the SC. This structure aligns with other joint committees and would avoid public confusion about which advisory committee was tasked to represent and address these concerns, particularly in view of the FY 2021 opening of the LBP facility.
- Parking Deficiencies – The AC is in discussions with the Department of Environmental Services (DES) to reverse the decision to remove 23 parking spaces on the westside of Quincy St adjacent to the WL campus. The decision was not adequately coordinated with other Arlington County Government (ACG) departments or impacted user groups.
- 4th High School Pool – The AC adopted a policy advocating support for the inclusion of an aquatic facility within any high school with 1,200 or more students with sufficient capacity to handle APS’ aquatics curriculum needs. APS is reaching a tipping point in its ability to schedule its elementary school program without eliminating community use time.

Participation in Work Groups, Committees, and Other Processes

Sports Commission: Ms. Eichers stepped down from her appointment as AC liaison to the SC. Her service was greatly appreciated. Ms. Sawert was appointed in her stead and regularly updates the AC on aquatics-related matters before the SC. As noted above, the AC and SC are considering changes to their charters to facilitate communications with the Board. Other areas of collaboration have included parking concerns and middle school diving.

Career Center Expansion: The AC supports the inclusion of an aquatics facility within the footprint of all Arlington neighborhood high schools. The growing demand for aquatics space to serve the surrounding community and the educational needs of students justifies the request. Busing high school students to other pools is not a practical or acceptable alternative. Ms. Hilton was appointed to the CC Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC) to represent the

aquatics community. The AC strongly supports APS staff proposals to include a pool on the CC site. Final BLPC recommendations are not expected until 26 February 2020.

Ed Center Reuse: Ms. Hilton was appointed to the Ed Center Building Level Planning Committee as a representative of the aquatics community. The need to preserve dedicated parking for use by aquatics, fields and planetarium patrons is a remaining issue of concern. AC is continuing to discuss this issue with DES.

Budget Process: Ms. Hilton and Ms. Sawert participated in key County and School Board meetings for stakeholders in advance of the finalization of the FY 2020 budget, and meetings have begun again in advance of the release of the County Manager's and Superintendent's FY 2021 budget proposals. The AC is advocating for O&M fee parity between community user groups, additional tax support from AGC, if necessary, sufficient to ensure that APS does not have to use its education dollars to support community swim needs. These proposals were vetted at a public forum. The forum was attended by 50 individuals. In conjunction with the forum, a customer satisfaction survey was distributed. 448 individuals responded to the survey. The majority of those who responded supported the AC's recommendations on O&M fee parity.

Long Bridge Park Aquatics Center (LBP): The AC has no official advisory role for the LBP, although two members, Ms. Judson and Ms. MacKenzie, serve on the Long Bridge Aquatic and Fitness Center Fee Working Group. The Working Group was reconvened on 11 December 2019 for DPR updates to the project and to consider the future of the Working Group. The AC hopes to take on advisory functions for the aquatics uses of the LBP facilities. The Committee believes that the County's aquatics community will be best served by one advisory committee facilitating communications and working to harmonize aquatics policy with the County and School Boards.

Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families: Ms. Hilton attended the Partnership's celebration of its "Do for Kids Champions" and presented an award to APS' aquatics management team for their work to ensure that Arlington children develop and perfect essential aquatic skills. Later in the year, the Partnership also invited the AC to highlight issues of common interest with the Partnership. These shared interests included the need for equity of opportunity to access aquatic facilities to ensure that all children developed life-saving aquatic skills, and the need for a 4th pool at the CC site.

Other Issues Addressed in 2019

Timing Equipment: The AC also followed up with APS staff on concerns raised in 2018 about difficulties with electronic timing systems used at pools during meets, training of staff, and how equipment is maintained. Staff reported that the difficulties stemmed from "harness" port limitations for the timing devices, and that different options would be explored and replacement made if funding permits.

Middle School Diving: The AC advocated on behalf of middle school diving opportunities after learning of an APS decision to terminate the program. APS staff have agreed to pilot developmental and intramural competitive opportunities for middle school students. Reevaluation of whether or not these accommodations addressed concerns will be made at the end of the school year.

Improving Communications: The AC is charged with being a conduit between Arlington aquatic users and the County and School Boards. The AC has struggled to ensure that the County’s swimmers are aware of AC activities, including the fact that one of the primary functions of the AC is to serve as a forum for the community to voice opinions and concerns. While listservs are maintained by DPR and APS for program purposes, the AC does not have access to these listservs. The AC launched a listserv this Fall and has invited swimmers to join.

2019 Communications to the Boards³

Issue	To	Statement/Letter	Date
Input on the FY 2020 Budget	County Board	Statement	23 FEB 19
		Statement/Letter	12 MAR 19
		Statement/Letter	2 APR 19
	School Board	Statement/Letter	28 MAR 19
		Statement/Letter	2 APR 19
		Statement/Letter	7 MAY 19
Input on the FY 2021 Budget	County Board/School Board	Letter	20 DEC 19
Input on the FY 2021-30 CIP	County Board/School Board	Letter	20 DEC 19
O&M Cost-Recovery	County Board	Letter	18 FEB 19
MS Dive Program	School Board	Letter	8 NOV 19

³ AC Letters to the County Board are submitted to the Sports Commission for distribution.